

Statement by Congressman Cec Heftel  
before the  
Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment  
of Civilians  
July 14, 1981

MISTER CHAIRMAN:

I am honored to participate in this ceremony to mark the opening of the Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. As a cosponsor of this legislation last year, I am particularly pleased to have the opportunity to say a few words this morning.

Executive Order 9066, issued February 19, 1942, resulted in the evacuation and internment of more than 120,000 Japanese-American civilian citizens and resident aliens. Just two months after the attack of Pearl Harbor, the Order was issued at a time of intense emotion and confusion. Tragically, Japanese citizens and legal resident aliens, who had up to that time never even been charged with an act of espionage or sabotage were detained without hearings or any other form of procedural due process of law.

Mr. Chairman, unfortunately these hearings are almost forty years overdue, but I am confident that this Commission will now undertake to thoroughly and objectively review the facts and circumstances surrounding Executive Order 9066. Most importantly this Commission now has a unique opportunity to clear the record and enlighten all Americans about this very unfortunate episode



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in our history. Past commissions have been an important tool in educating the public about events which have otherwise gone unexplained. This Commission, by attempting to solve numerous unresolved questions can similarly educate Americans about this episode, thus serving to deter a reoccurrence of similar injustice.

I look forward to the success of these hearings. The strength of our nation rests in the diversity of our backgrounds and our ability to build upon them, and I believe this Commission will serve to enhance the greatness of our country.

Thank you.